

# **AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION MEETING**

**October 13, 2009**

**First Floor Meeting Room, Town Hall**

## **MINUTES**

**Members Present:** Pauline Lannon, Ruth Hazzard, Pat Wagner, Jaime Tidlund, and Sally Fitz

**Non-Voting Members Present:** Richard Roznoy (Planning Board)

**Non-Members Present:** Diana Stein (Selectboard), David Ziomek (Staff Liaison)

The September minutes will be reviewed and approved at the November meeting.

### **Planning Board Member Role**

The meeting began with a concern Richard brought to the table regarding his status as an Ag Com member and whether or not he is a voting member or not or whether his presence adds to the quorum. After reviewing the committee charge it was decided that Richard as a member of the planning board is a non-voting member who acts as a bridge between the Ag Com and the planning board. Although the Ag Com needs a direct link to the planning board in the past the representative from the Planning Board was a voting member, they did not always show up which posed a problem in trying to get a quorum.

### **Farm Festival**

A report of the farm festival was given the members of the committee who took part in the events that day reported that although the weather was poor the turnout was ok. Only 30 tickets were sold for the BBQ, many of the farms on the tours had decent turnout, some however only had one or two visitors.

The committee discussed that for future festivals we could try to work with other farms that also have festivals and offer one big Ag. Event. The challenge in this area is dilution we need to come up with a way to make the event special and unique so people will feel a real urge to attend. It was also mentioned that maybe each time we have the festival there can be a host farm with the focus of the day being on that farm and there general area and the farms near them. A concern about this was that the common is a nice place to hold events because it is kind of the center stage, having out of sight may not draw people to it. There was also a discussion about how to offer kids and families a way to become educated about agricultural without a cost, maybe the farmers market could have a "farm of the week" and showcase this farm so people can learn more about it. It was also thought that the town could offer a link between Agricultural and the schools.

### **Farmers Market/Board of Health special meeting:**

Some board of health members met with David, Ruth and the town manager regarding the Farmers Market and how things have been going there. It was reported that things have been going well between farmers and the BOH there is thought that a special meeting between the BOH and the Market would take place in the fall or winter after the market is closed, maybe the AgCom could co-sponsor the meeting. It was noted that the

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Northampton BOH takes a very hands off approach when it comes to their market usually they don't even attend the market, which makes farmers at the Amherst Market feel like Amherst is over regulating based on the approach other towns are taking. Maybe we could use the Farmers Forum as a tool to get the BOH rules and regulations out to farmers. The discussion continued with more talks about how to either expand the current market or offer another market on another day to help more farmers be able to market their goods. Again Kendrick Park came up with the idea that having the market there on another day would be more accepted by town officials because they would not have to sacrifice the Spring St. lot and meter on another day. The AgCom will need input from farms about what they could do to help. Sally is going to send our BOH liaison David Ahlfeld e-mail introducing herself as his contact with the AgCom so we can discuss with him a meeting with the Market and also how to educate farms on the issues that come up regarding the BOH that may affect them.

### **APR/Conservation Land**

David talked about the town's action plan and how it speaks to specific areas and that the town has "priority areas". David has a spread sheet that shows how many APRs, and Conservation's the town has done over time, he also mentioned that there are different ways for the town to protect land not just using APRs.

### **Farming on Town Land**

Another discussion took place regarding farmers who would like to farm but don't have the means to do it because of costs and locations, it was thought that some town land could be used as well as institutional land and private land.

The next meeting will be held on November 17<sup>th</sup> NOT November 10<sup>th</sup> with the following items being a couple of agenda items:

1. New Members
2. APR Improvement Programs